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June 2006**

## **NATURAL FEATURES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The natural features section of the Master Plan uses the environmental criteria of topography, soils, and water resources to evaluate the town's land area and its potential for various types of development. Although natural features can often enhance a particular development site, they just as often pose significant barriers to development; this can be seen by examining locations where existing development has occurred. It is true that transportation routes are another factor in the location of development; however, to a great degree, the natural features of the land also determine the location of roads and the former railroads.

This section enables the Planning Board to address areas of the town that are most suitable for development and high intensity land uses, and evaluate the existing limitations of the land that would have to be accommodated. Environmental limitations may include steep slopes, seasonally wet soils, wetlands, floodplains, shallow bedrock, and aquifers.

This section also identifies the areas of town that deserve special protection due to the environmental function of the land, for example, a specific wetland area that provides flood water storage during times of heavy rain. In addition, this section notes specific areas the town may wish to conserve for future community use due to their aesthetic or historic qualities. Not all open spaces need to be steep slopes or wetlands. Some areas may be prime lands set aside for future school sites, parks, intensive farming operations, or other limited low intensity land uses that add value to the overall community.

Troy has many natural features that make the town a very desirable place to live. The Town has maintained a typical New England character with the Town Common in the center, and the development spiraling out from this center. Outside of the village, Troy is still quite rural, with fields, streams, and woods. As development pressures mount, however, there will be more pressure on the Planning Board to allow smaller lot sizes in other parts of Town. This section will aid the Planning Board and the residents to decide where they want growth to occur while at the same time preserving the natural environment that is critical to a high quality of life.

### **TOPOGRAPHY**

Troy has a land area of 17.7 square miles or 11,328 acres. The approximate elevation at the center of Troy is 1000 feet, with elevations increasing away from the downtown. The two most distinguishing features in Troy are Gap Mountain and Bigelow Hill located on the Jaffrey border. With elevations of over 1860 feet and almost 1700 feet, respectively, these mountains are separated by the narrow drainage of Quarry Brook and together define the eastern Town boundary. Another major feature is Little Monadnock Mountain which is located along the southwestern border with Fitzwilliam. To the west of the downtown lies West Hill. Distinguished with a broad expanse of relatively level land, West Hill is part of a chain of low rolling hills stretching to the northern boundary with Marlborough. Also defining

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the northern boundary with Marlborough is the narrow, steep sided Ashuelot River drainage which parallels Route 12 South.

Topography is an important consideration when assessing the development potential of land. Soil conditions are directly related to topography, with slope and drainage features having a determining influence. While slope is only one of many factors influencing the soil type of a particular site, it is the primary component of topography. The following discussion defines slope and addresses the influence slope has on the development potential of land.

### SOILS

Soils information is an important consideration in land use planning since the various characteristics of soils – such as steepness, wetness, flood susceptibility, etc - have such an impact on land use opportunities. Soil information for Troy was obtained from the following sources:

1. Soil descriptions and mapping: Soil Survey of Cheshire County, New Hampshire, published by the US Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, 1982.
2. Soil development capability: Soil Potential Ratings for Development, Cheshire County, NH, prepared by the Cheshire County Conservation District in 1984.

The soils of Troy are characteristic of the Monadnock Region with an almost equal division among developable and undevelopable soil types. Approximately 50% of the soils in Town are suitable for development while some 50% have restrictive features such as wetness, steepness of slope, hardpan or floodplain conditions. Soils on steep slopes are usually thin with exposed bedrock or a shallow depth to bedrock. Floodplain soils tend to be fine and sandy with wetland conditions. Floodplain areas often have a well-developed topsoil making them desirable for certain agricultural uses.

### STEEP SLOPES

Generally speaking, the steeper the land the greater the possibility for erosion and sedimentation, and the more problems can be encountered in siting wells and septic systems.

Steepness is measured in terms of slope, which is defined as the change in elevation (vertical distance) over horizontal distance; the more abrupt the change in elevation, the steeper the slope. Slope is measured and expressed as a percentage that represents the relationship between elevation and horizontal distance.

Typical categories that might be seen on a slope map are 0-8%, 9-15%, 16-24%, and over 25%. Land in the 0-8% slope category is generally preferred for all types of development. Gradual slopes are most favorable for building roads and public water and sewer facilities can be installed at the least cost to the community. Also, excavations for most structures can be done at a minimal cost and the erosion associated with such work can be reduced easily on-site. The exceptions to this would be wetland areas and floodplains because they occur primarily in the 0-5% slope range. An examination should be made as to the environmental function of such wetland and floodplain areas, as well as the risks that might be inherent in development before such lands are utilized for building sites.

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As slopes increase to 8-15%, the land is more suited to less intensive forms of development. Carefully placed residential dwellings and some agricultural uses (orchards and field crops) may be suitable for this terrain. As development approaches a 15% gradient, it requires more careful consideration for all types of development. Once a slope exceeds a 15% gradient, all forms of development are considered unsuitable, although it is really at the 25% slope and above that development becomes very problematic. Areas having 25 percent or greater slope have benefits as conservation areas for low intensity recreational uses and wildlife habitats. Also, their disturbance can create serious erosion problems, washing out topsoil and even roadways downhill. Forestry practices on such slopes must be confined to low-impact operations, with proper erosion controls in place. Other important controls for forestry uses include minimal basal area cutting, and skid roads designed for steep slope harvesting.

When developing steep terrain, the potential for environmental damage increases as the slope gradient increases. Overly steep slopes consisting of sands and gravels left after the excavation of an area will quickly gully and erode. Erosion control barriers should be in place at the time of excavation and prompt re-seeding and re-grading should take place afterwards. Surface water run-off rates and erosion factors increase as the slope steepness increases. This will cause sedimentation of the surface waters down slope and will clog stream channels and rivers if no erosion controls are in place.

Troy has seven soil types associated with steep slopes, which are primarily found on the sides of hills, along ridge tops, and as rocky outcrops void of soil cover:

#### Steep Slope Soil Types

Symbol	Soil Type	Characteristics	Slope
36E	Adams	Loamy sand,	15-50%
60D	Tunbridge-Berkshire	Stony fine sandy loam	15-25%
61C	Tunbridge-Lyman	Rock outcrop	15-15%
61D	Tunbridge-Lyman	Rock outcrop	15-25%
161E	Lyman-Tunbridge	Rock outcrop	25-50%
365E	Berkshire & Monadnock	Stony fine sandy loam	25-50%
399	Rock outcrop		

Source: Soil Survey of Cheshire County, New Hampshire, 1982

These soils are found on the sides of hills, along ridges and as rocky outcrops void of soils. Ranging in slope from 8% to 50%, these soils are classified by the SCS as having low and/or very low development potential because of steep slope, exposed or shallow bedrock and the lack of adequate corrective measures capable of increasing the development potential of such sites.

#### WETLAND SOILS

Wetland soils in Troy are those that the soil survey categorizes as being poorly drained or very poorly drained (including muck and peat). Troy has a very scattered pattern of wetland soils, accounting for only

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11% of the total land area, or 1,474 acres. The Wetlands Map shows many small patches and a few rather large sections of wetlands in the Town, the largest being in the area of West Hill Reservoir. The eastern part of Town is fairly well covered with various-sized patches of wetlands.

The soil types and characteristics that make up the wetland soils are described below:

#### Wetland Soil Types

Symbol	Soil Type	Characteristics	Suited For	Not Suited For
15	Searsport Muck	Nearly level and very poorly drained	Habitat for wetland wildlife. Probable source of sand for construction	Building site development, septic systems, recreation development, and farming
197	Borochemists, ponded	Nearly level and very poorly drained	Habitat for wetland wildlife	Most uses
214	Naumberg Find Sandy Loam	Nearly level and somewhat poorly drained and poorly drained	Habitat for openland, woodland, and wetland wildlife. Probable source of sand for construction	Building site development, septic systems, recreation development, and farming
295	Greenwood Mucky Peat	Nearly level and very poorly drained	Habitat for wetland wildlife	Most uses
341B	Stissing	Stony silt loam		
347B	Lyme Moosilauke	Very stony		
395	Chocorua Mucky Peat	Nearly level and very poorly drained	Habitat for wetland wildlife. Probable source of sand for construction	Most uses
414	Moosilauke	Fine sandy loam		
495	Ossipee	Mucky peat		
533	Raynham	Silt loam		
547B	Lyme	Stony fine sandy loam		
646B	Pillsbury Fine Sandy Loam			
647B	Pillsbury Stony Loam	Nearly level to gently sloping, somewhat poorly drained and poorly drained	Habitat for woodland wildlife	Building site development, septic systems, and recreation development

Source: Soil Survey of Cheshire County, New Hampshire, 1982

#### AGRICULTURAL SOILS

The Cheshire County Soil Survey also designates prime farmland, which is land of major importance in meeting the nation's needs for food and fiber. Of the nine soil types that are considered to be prime farmland, seven of them are found in Troy. Furthermore, they may exist in formations that are too small

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or inaccessible for crop farms. The LESA (Agricultural Lands Evaluation and Site Assessment) manual should be consulted when a choice needs to be made regarding the use of one particular farmland over another, depending on whether the use is for farming or general development.

## **FLOODPLAINS**

Floodplains are land areas that are susceptible to flooding. These areas actually have two parts: the floodway and floodway fringe. The floodway includes the channel and an additional area that often carries excess flow. The floodway fringe (more commonly known as the 100-year floodplain or the Special Flood Hazard Area) is a broader area over which floodwater may spread, but where the flow velocity is slower. This is an important distinction for land use planning, since some uses can safely occur in the Special Flood Hazard Area, but not in the floodway.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has mapped the floodplains for all relevant municipalities; the boundaries of the floodplains were computed at cross sections interpolated between cross sections, based on hydraulic information and past experience of flooding. Flood Insurance Rate Maps define the 100-year floodplain (meaning there is a 1 out of 100 chance of flooding in any given year; over long periods of time, base floods will occur on the average once every 100 years), and an area of 500-year floodplain (a 1 out of 500 chance of flooding in any given year).

The Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Troy became effective March 8, 1994, and the town then entered into the National Flood Insurance Program, which permits homeowners who live in the floodplain to purchase insurance for their property. However, in order for landowners to be able to purchase this insurance, the town needed to adopt a Floodplain Management Ordinance, which it has done. This Ordinance requires the town to keep track of all development in the Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) and ensure that if any new construction or substantial improvements to a home are proposed for the SFHA, the lowest enclosed floor must be at or above the base flood elevation.

The purposes of this requirement are to minimize the potential for flood damage, to avoid damage-prone uses in the floodplains, and to reduce development pressure of flood hazard areas. Communities that do not maintain and/or enforce their floodplain regulations may be suspended from the insurance program, which could have serious consequences for any affected landowners if their mortgage holders wished to cancel the mortgage. For these reasons, it is very important for the town to keep the floodplain management ordinance up to date by amending it as necessary, and to monitor all development within these areas.

Troy has very little floodplain soil, only about 115 acres, or 1% of the total land area. These areas are primarily located in the center of the Town, north and south in the vicinity of Route 12. These soils are prone to flooding primarily in the late winter and early spring months. They are characteristically fine, sandy, and sometimes loamy. Rivers and streams are responsible for the deposition of these sediments during times of high water. Oftentimes these soils are rich in nutrients and suitable for agricultural activities.

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## WATER RESOURCES

Our water resources: perennial streams, ponds, lakes, wetlands, floodplains, and stratified drift aquifers, are some of our most sensitive natural resource areas - susceptible to loss due to small size, fragile conditions, poor prospects for regeneration once disturbed, vulnerability for water contamination, and areas with a high potential for special communities or species. We are familiar with the legacy of degraded water quality and aquatic habitats, the loss of riparian habitat, the diversion of rain water and snow melt from natural courses of meandering through low lands or recharging ground water. Just as the ubiquity of trees along country roads throughout our Region may belie the degradation of natural forested communities by the road and traffic, home building and recurrent timber harvest, so the abundance of water may perpetuate a false sense of security about the well-being of the aquatic in our landscape mosaic.

Discussing water resources in terms of these discrete features – ponds, streams, aquifers – should not obscure the fact that these are not static, isolated resources, but parts of our hydrologic system – the ceaseless cycling of water through the atmosphere, soil and geologic formations, myriad organisms, and overland as surface water – and through our homes, businesses and industries.

Troy has a land area of 17.7 square miles, or 11,328 acres. Only one square mile of this total area consists of surface water. Troy has no sizable water bodies, Perkins Pond (29 acres) being the largest. There are numerous streams flowing throughout the Town. Aquifers, or groundwater, are also included in this analysis, since they provide an important source of water for private and community wells. A description of the town's watersheds, waterbodies, watercourses, and aquifers is presented below.

### WATERSHEDS

A **watershed** is a land area from which all the surface run-off drains at a single point. Watersheds can be any size, from a parking lot to half a continent. Watersheds are meaningful units for conservation planning because of the pervasive nature of water – it continuously moves through the natural and manmade environments and our water quality is the net product of everything it encounters - air, soil, pavement, forests – and in the event that a water quality problem is identified, the cause is probably within the same watershed.

Watersheds for this project were delineated to identify all land area from which water flows into and through Troy, hence the total land area of the watersheds considered here is greater than the total land area of the Troy corporate limits.

The Town of Troy falls within the South Branch Ashuelot River Watershed, with the exception of the southwest corner of Gap Mountain and Potter's Pond, which is within the Miller's River Watershed. The Town has been further subdivided into 15 sub-watersheds, some nested within others, to identify the land area from which water flowing in major streams and water bodies originates as rainfall, snow melt, or groundwater outbreak.

The drainage pattern is formed for the most part by Bigelow Hill, Gap Mountain, West Hill and Brennan Hill. All of the streams but one flow from the east, south and west toward the center of Town, and then northerly to collect in the South Branch of the Ashuelot. The one exception to this pattern is Falls Brook, which flows westerly into Richmond.

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#### WATERBODIES

Troy has 15 waterbodies scattered throughout Town. Most of them are quite small, only measuring a few acres or less in size. The largest is Perkins Pond (29 acres) in the east in the border with Jaffrey. The Sand Dam is the other larger body of water, at 24 acres. The Sand Dam is formed from the damming of Rockwood Brook and is drained each year. Most of these waterbodies are connected to the streams and brooks which form the drainage pattern; there are a few very small isolated bodies of water around Town. Troy's waterbodies are really too small to support much recreation use, with the exception of Sand Dam, where the Town operates a swimming program for children in the summer.

#### RIVERS AND STREAMS

Troy has a total of 20 perennial watercourses, the most significant one being the South Branch of the Ashuelot River. The South Branch is formed from the convergence of several smaller waterbodies; these are delineated on the Surface Water Map.

#### AQUIFERS

Aquifers are geologic formations (either fractured bedrock or sand and gravel) that by virtue of their physical structure and location on the landscape can provide water through drilled wells in sufficient quantities to support human uses. Characteristics of high-value aquifers include being situated down stream in a watershed, being in a watershed with a preponderance of natural forested land cover, and having a physical structure that is highly permeable – open spaces between particles of sand and gravel or open fissures and interconnected networks of cracks in bedrock - to both store and transmit water. Aquifers are re-supplied primarily by water falling as precipitation. Rain and snow melt move downward through soil, sand and gravel and/or cracks in bedrock to a saturated zone where the spaces between particles and cracks in rock are filled with water. It is very important that the surface of the earth be able to transmit water so that a certain percentage can be stored underground. Excessive compaction or extensive covering of the land surface reduces the volume of groundwater which affects the supply of water to wells.

Aquifers of medium to high potential occur in southwestern New Hampshire as unconsolidated deposits of sand and gravel, or in bedrock fractures. The unconsolidated deposits in this region are principally stratified drift deposits (sand and gravel sorted and deposited by running water from the melting glaciers) that are usually in valley floors or on adjacent hill slopes. These materials have abundant pore space to store water, and pore space may amount to more than 30 percent of the total volume of the deposit. Consequently, stratified deposits at the bottom of watersheds are good aquifers.

Fractured bedrock can be highly-productive aquifers, especially when overlaid by a layer of sand gravel, which allows the recharge to occur directly from above. Most domestic water wells in Troy are drilled into bedrock – and while many have low yields, bedrock fractures can be staggeringly water rich – and sometimes transmit great volumes of water over many miles.

In contrast, a till aquifer will typically have a lower-yielding well life due to its mixture of clay, silt, gravel and boulders that tend to compact. The transmission and storage of water is greatly decreased in

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this type of aquifer. The water table (the top of the saturated zone) can fluctuate, depending on the volume recharge to aquifer material.

Groundwater in saturated soils is generally vulnerable to pollution because surface contamination can infiltrate directly into it. It is possible, however, to trace the source of pollution by finding the watershed boundary. Once a pollutant enters an aquifer, it may remain in place for an indeterminate period of time. While pollutants can enter an aquifer easily because sand and gravel are porous and transmit water rapidly, once in the aquifer their movement is then governed by groundwater flow, which moves very slowly through the tiny pore spaces of the glacial till.

Sources of aquifer pollution are frequently located on the ground surface directly above or contiguous to the aquifer: septic tank effluent, landfill refuse, leakage from sewer lines or ruptured fuel tanks, agricultural fertilizers and pesticides are among the many possible sources of pollution for an aquifer. In addition to these potential contaminants are the materials such as fuels, lubricants or other toxic materials associated with earth excavation, an activity that is, of course, directly associated with sand and gravel aquifers.

The US Geological Survey provides aquifer delineation maps for the entire state. The map is essentially a surficial geology map, showing the distribution of unconsolidated (not bedrock) geologic material on the land surface. Bedrock aquifers do exist, but these were not part of this particular study. This study identifies areas of sand and gravel and measures the rate of transmissivity - that is, the speed with which water passes through the materials, in increments of 1,000 feet squared per day.

The *Aquifer Map* for Troy shows the locations of soils that are commonly associated with concentrations of groundwater (aquifers). As may be seen from the examination of this map, the highest potential for the location of an aquifer is along the Quarry Brook watershed in east Troy. This area, consisting of approximately 44 acres, has been identified as the site of soils with a high potential for yielding groundwater. Between Gap Mountain and Bigelow Hill, part of Troy is sparsely developed and the site of the Town wells, serving as the central water supply for a large portion of the Town.

Right next to this is an area along Quarry Brook of 52 acres with those soils that could indicate an aquifer with medium yield potential. A much larger area of low potential aquifer soils is located along the South Branch Valley from the Fitzwilliam Town line north to Marlborough. Consisting of approximately 483 acres, these soils are concentrated around the densely developed Troy village north along Route 12. Also, a large concentration is located in the vicinity of Cushing Pond, near the Fitzwilliam border. Four other, much smaller, deposits of low potential aquifer soils are located in the West Hill section of Town near the Swanzey boundary.

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### NATURAL RESOURCES ANALYSIS

The distribution of the resources described here are show in attached maps. The distribution of these resources are also quantified by watershed in the table sand figures on the following pages. In addition, the location of buildings, roads, fields, gravel pits, etc, are also accounted for in the watershed analysis. The natural resources data available for use in the Planning Commission's GIS data is described without regard for development, e.g. a USDA Soil Survey may indicate an area of land as prime farmland soil, while in reality, that land also has several homes and roads. In the tables that follow, the analysis attempts to quantify the displacement of natural resource by development – the numbers that correspond with the variable name qualified with “net” – meaning the area free of buildings, yards and pavement. The analysis is summarized for 1) the entire study area, 2) the watershed of the South Branch Shallot, and 3) the land area in Troy that does not drain to the South Branch, so-called “leftovers”.

	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>South Branch Watershed</b>	<b>Leftover Watersheds</b>
<b>Water Resources</b>			
TOTAL STUDY AREA (acres)	24,642	24,078	564
NET AREA (acres)	24,002	23,446	556
TOTAL LAND AREA IN STUDY AREA (acres)	24,191	23,628	563
NET AREA (acres)	23,553	22,996	557
TOTAL LAND AREA IN TOWN	10,604	10,604	
NET AREA (acres)	10,604	10,604	
LAKES & PONDS (count)	69	69	0
WATERBODIES, AREA (acres)	409	409	0
WATERBODY SHORELINE (miles)	23	23	0
NET SHORELINE (miles)	23	23	0
STREAMS (miles)	47	47	0
RIPARIAN AREA - 100-FT BUFFER (acres)	2,416	2,416	0
USGS WETLAND (acres)	476	472	5
USGS WETLAND w 100-FT BUFFER (acres)	2,393	2,373	21
NWI WETLAND (acres)	1,618	1,607	11
USDA HYDRIC SOIL (acres)	2,983	2,935	49
STRATIFIED DRIFT AQUIFERS (acres)	1,034	1,034	0

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<b>Sensitive Resource Areas</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>South Branch Watershed</b>	<b>Leftover Watersheds</b>
RIPARIAN AREA - 100-FT BUFFER (acres)	2,416	2,416	0
USGS WETLAND (acres)	476	472	5
USGS WETLAND w 100-FT BUFFER (acres)	2,393	2,373	21
NWI WETLAND (acres)	1,618	1,607	11
USDA HYDRIC SOIL (acres)	2,983	2,935	49
STRATIFIED DRIFT AQUIFERS (acres)	1,034	1,034	0
USDA EXCESSIVELY WELL DRAINED (acres)	504	254	250
USDA SLOPE > 25% (acres)	2,145	2,013	132
DEM SLOPE > 25% (acres)	743	743	0
USDA PRONE TO FLOODING (acres)	208	208	0
FOREST SOIL GROUPS IIA & IIB	6,468	6,216	251

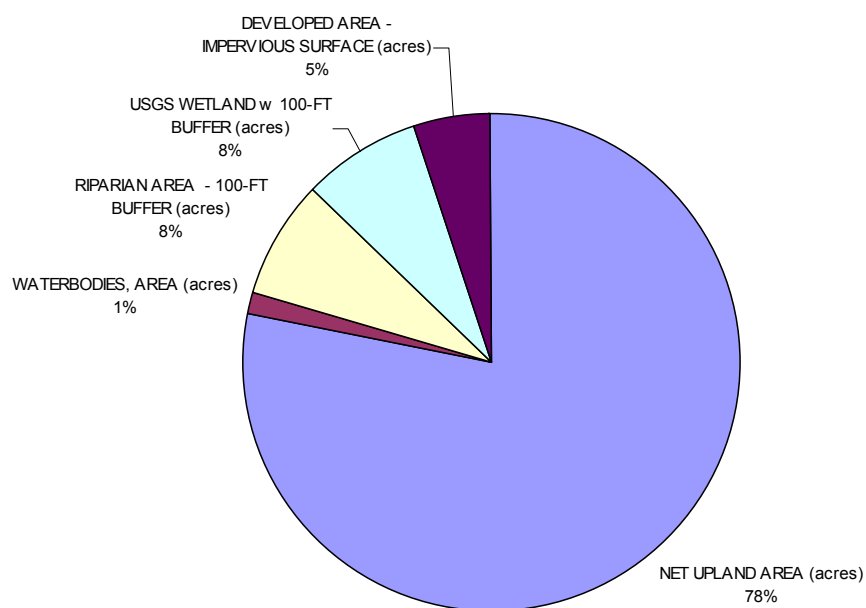
<b>Soil Resources</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>South Branch Watershed</b>	<b>Leftover Watersheds</b>
PRIME FARM LAND (acres)	535	535	0
<i>PRIME FARM LAND-NET (acres)</i>	<i>377</i>	<i>377</i>	<i>0</i>
FARMLAND OF STATE IMPORTANCE (acres)	586	570	16
<i>FARMLAND OF STATE IMPORTANCE - NET (acres)</i>	<i>467</i>	<i>453</i>	<i>14</i>
FOREST SOIL GROUPS (acres)			
I A, I B, & I C	16,030	15,744	286
<i>I A, I B, &amp; I C-NET</i>	<i>14,784</i>	<i>14,502</i>	<i>282</i>
II A & II B	6,468	6,216	251
<i>II A &amp; II B-NET</i>	<i>6,240</i>	<i>5,991</i>	<i>249</i>
Not Classified	1,723	1,698	26
<i>NC-NET</i>	<i>1,673</i>	<i>1,647</i>	<i>26</i>

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<b>Development Parameters</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>South Branch Watershed</b>	<b>Leftover Watersheds</b>
STRUCTURES (count)	956	951	5
ROADS (acres)	632	632	0
DEVELOPED AREA - IMPERVIOUS SURFACE (acres)	1,535	1,527	8
% WATERSHED AREA IMPERVIOUS	6%	6%	
NPS POLLUTION SOURCES (count)	48	48	0
PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIES (count)	18	18	0
WELLHEAD PROTECTION AREAS (acres)	2,362	2,362	0

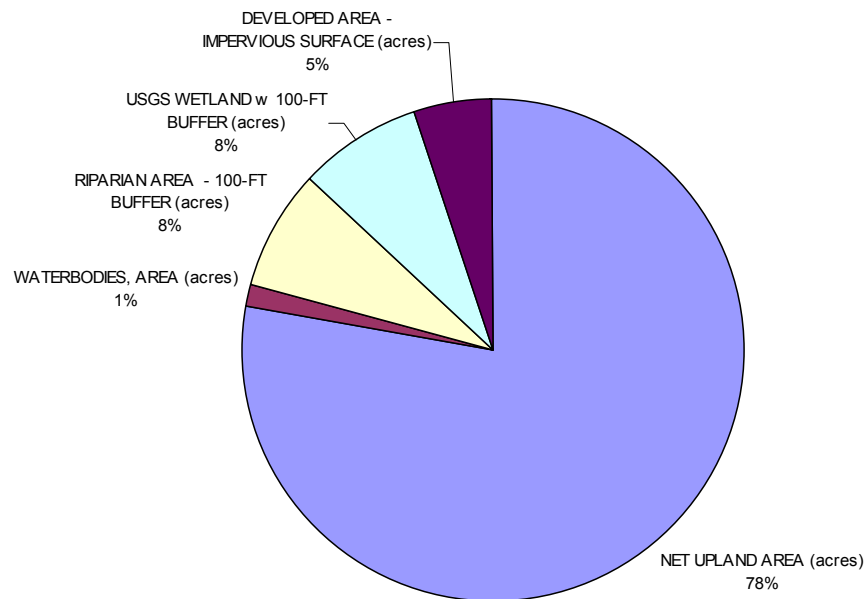
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**STUDY AREA**



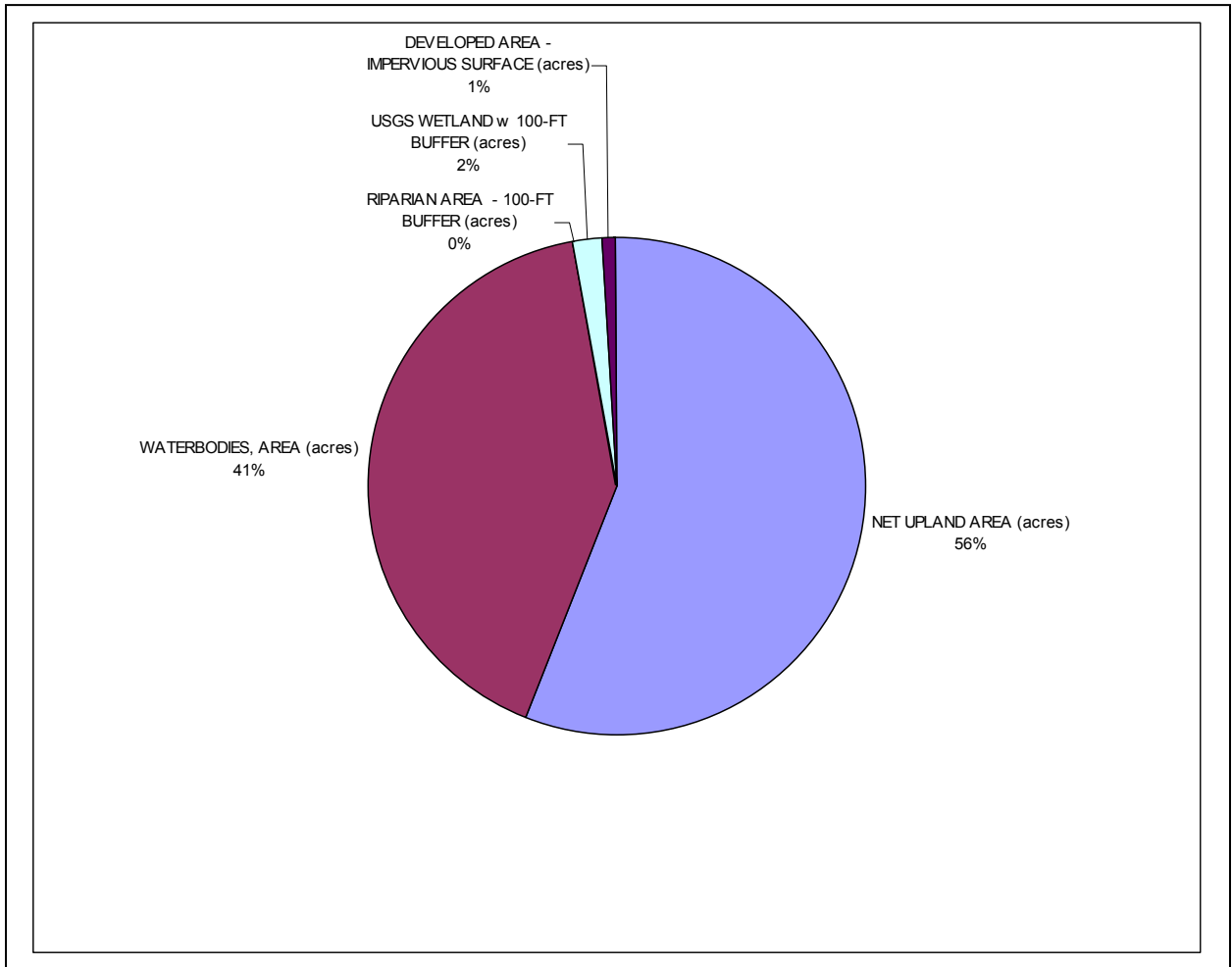
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**SOUTH BRANCH**



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LEFTOVERS



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#### OPEN SPACE

Providing for the preservation of open space is an important aspect of town planning. Open space provides many benefits to a community:

- ◆ Maintenance of rural character and pleasant scenery.
- ◆ Provides buffers between developments.
- ◆ Wildlife habitat protection.
- ◆ Groundwater protection, water retention, and groundwater recharge.
- ◆ Flood control.
- ◆ Food production.
- ◆ Air purification and the production of oxygen.
- ◆ Recreational opportunities.

#### FEDERAL, STATE AND LCHIP PROPERTIES

The following table shows the amount of federal and state owned open space lands, as well as all parcels protected under the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) in Troy and surrounding towns.

#### NEIGHBORING OPEN SPACE COMPARISONS

TOWN	OPEN SPACE IN ACRES	% OF AREA	TOTAL % OF SUBREGIONAL TOTAL
TROY	1,010	8.9%	5.1%
Marlborough	846	6.4%	4.3%
Jaffrey	11,343	44.1%	57.6%
Fitzwilliam	1,298	5.6%	6.6%
Richmond	3,011	12.5%	15.3%
Swanzy	2,187	7.5%	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,696</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Southwest Region Planning Commission GIS

Troy has a low percentage of Federal, State and LCHIP lands in terms of both the total area of the town and the subregional total (8.9% and 5.1% respectively). The Town of Jaffrey has the highest percentage of open space (44.1% and 57.6%).

#### CURRENT USE

The Current Use Taxation program was enacted in 1973 to promote the preservation of open land in the state by allowing qualifying land to be taxed at a reduced rate based on its current use value as opposed to a more extensive use. The minimum land area currently needed to qualify is ten acres. The price of this favorable treatment is a 10 percent penalty tax (10% of the sale price) when the property is later changed to a non-qualifying use.

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In comparing conservation easements to current use taxation, easements are permanent, while current use may be reversed by change to a non-qualifying use and payment of the Use Change Tax. Thus, current use may satisfy the goals of a landowner who cannot afford to permanently abandon future development value, but desires current property tax relief. If it becomes financially necessary to subdivide, the use change tax becomes an element of the development costs.

The current use designation, authorized by RSA 70-A, provides the town other benefits as well: it encourages landowners to maintain traditional land-based occupations such as farming and forestry; promotes open space, preserving natural plant and animal communities, healthy surface and groundwater; and provides opportunities for skiers, hikers, sightseers, and hunters.